ANNUAL

ETERNALS

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VAN LENTE
ALIXE
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BEHOLD, MORTALS. THE ETERNALS! CREATED BY COSMIC BEINGS CALLED THE CELESTIALS AND TASKED WITH SAFEGUARDING THE EARTH, THE ETERNALS ARE AN IMMORTAL GROUP OF HEROES WHOSE NEAR LIMITLESS POWER IS UNLIKE ANYTHING HUMANITY HAS EVER KNOWN!



MAKKARI



SERSI



THENA



IKARIS



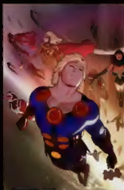
AJAK



ZURAS



LEGBA



THE ETERNALS HAVE EXISTED FOR UNTOLD CENTURIES, GOING BY MANY NAMES AND PROTECTING EARTH THROUGHOUT RECORDED HISTORY, OFTEN WORSHIPPED AS GODS. WHEN AN ETERNAL'S BODY "DIES" HIS CONSCIOUSNESS IS REBORN IN A NEW BODY FROM THEIR REACTIVATION CHAMBERS.

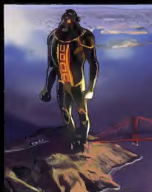
AS THE GUARDIANS OF THE PLANET, THE ETERNALS ARE ENDOWED WITH ABILITIES BEYOND THOSE OF MORTAL MEN. THESE INCLUDE FLIGHT, STRENGTH, FORCE BLASTS, TELEPORTATION, TRANSMUTATION, SPEED, AND DURABILITY. OVER TIME, INDIVIDUAL ETERNALS HONE THESE SKILLS TO VARYING DEGREES.





NOW, THE ETERNALS ARE DIVIDED. SOME, LIKE IKARIS AND THENA, STAY LOYAL TO THE PRIME ETERNAL ZURAS. OTHERS, LIKE LEGBA, FAVOR THE AMBITIOUS DRUIG, WHO SEEKS TO REPLACE ZURAS IN HIS ROLE.

ONE OF THE CELESTIAL WHO CREATED THEM NOW STANDS SILENTLY IN SAN FRANCISCO. THIS "DREAMING CELESTIAL" HAS CHOSEN MAKKARI AS HIS COMMUNICATOR... A DECISION WHICH HAS AWOKEN GREAT IRE IN AJAK, WHO HAD ALWAYS COMMUNED WITH THE CELESTIALS IN THE PAST.



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PACIFIC RIM,
ISLAND NATION OF MADRIPOOR

THE PRINCIPALITY OF MADRIPOOR BOASTS ABOUT A MILLION SOULS.

AND AT PRESENT, EVEN THOUGH OUR COMPUTERS IN OLYMPIA SAYS THEIR HEARTS STILL BEAT, THEIR LUNGS STILL DRAW BREATH...

...THEIR BRAINWAVE READINGS HAVE **FLATLINED.** THE ENTIRE CITY IS, FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES...

...BRAIN-DEAD.

TRUE BELIEVERS

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SERIOUSLY?
DID WE MAKE A WRONG TURN SOMEWHERE AND END UP IN *BEVERLY HILLS?*
COME ON, SERSI, THIS IS *SERIOUS...*
IT IS IF THE CITIZENS' PSYCHES ARE WHAT'S FUELING THAT... THAT...
...WHEN DID OLYMPIA FIRST DETECT IT, AJAK?
AROUND NOON LOCAL TIME, SO THREE HOURS AGO, GIVE OR TAKE. SAME TIME AS THE ENTIRE ISLAND LOST ITS COLLECTIVE *MINDS.*

AJAK: Knower
AND MY READINGS HERE IN ANTARCTICA INDICATE THAT WHATEVER THAT THING IS, IT'S *EXPANDING.*
THE POPULATIONS OF SINGAPORE AND INDONESIA ARE ALREADY SUCCUMBING TO IT--THEIR MINDS GETTING SUCKED IN.
IF IT MAINTAINS ITS CURRENT RATE OF GROWTH, IT WILL BEGIN ABSORBING MAINLAND CHINA WITHIN THE *HOUR.*
AND BEIJING HAS LOTS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND LITTLE PATIENCE FOR FOREIGN THREATS.

YOU HEARD THE MAN! THE WORLD IS ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH OBLIVION. WE'RE FACING AN UNKNOWN, POSSIBLY *UNSTOPPABLE* THREAT...
THIS IS WHY WE *GET UP* IN THE MORNING!
IKARIS: Mover
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF. LET'S JUST MAKE THIS QUICK.
I PROMISED MY SON I'D HELP HIM WITH HIS *FRACTIONS.*
THENA: Defender
MAKKARI: Teller
IT... *LOOKS* LIKE THE UNI-MIND WE *ETERNALS* FORM WHEN WE MERGE OUR PSYCHES TOGETHER...
YEAH, EXCEPT *OUR* MINDS AREN'T AFFECTED. AND THESE HUMANS' BODIES HAVE REMAINED *BEHIND...*
KINDA LOOKS LIKE THE AVALON BALLROOM AFTER ONE OF D.J. GALAKTIKUS'S *RAVES...*
SERSI: Maker

WAIT.

MYSTERY *SOLVED.*

AND IKARIS THINKS WHAT IKARIS ALWAYS THINKS, WHICH IS:

*"HOW COULD A MAN AS NOBLE AS MY UNCLE VALKIN HAVE SIRED SUCH A WRETCH AS **DRUIG?***

*"HOW MUCH **EASIER** WOULD OUR ROLE AS EARTH'S PROTECTORS BE WITHOUT THE CONSTANT DRAIN OF CONTENDING WITH **HIS** INNUMERABLE CONSPIRACIES AND VILE ALLIES?"*

LEGBA: Manipulator

I DON'T KNOW HOW THIS STUNT FITS INTO YOUR MASTER'S LARGER PLOT, LEGBA...

...BUT I DO HOPE IT'S WORTH THE ***BEATING*** YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET.

YOU GOT SOME BAD INFORMATION SOMEWHERE, BOY. I AM MY ***OWN*** MASTER.

I SUPPORT DRUIG IN HIS BID TO BECOME PRIME ETERNAL BECAUSE I THINK IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

I'M SORRY. I KNOW. IT MUST COME AS A ***TERRIBLE*** SHOCK: SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T THINK ***EXACTLY*** AS YOU DO.

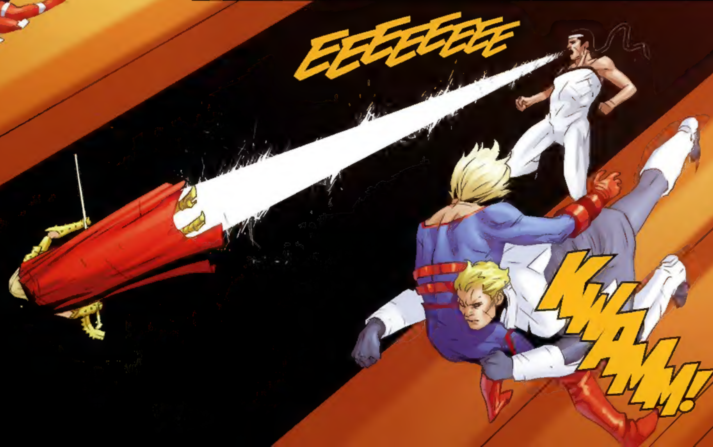
AS FOR WHATEVER HAPPENED HERE, IT'S AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY TO US IN VOROZHEIKA TOO.

THAT'S WHY DRUIG SENT ME TO INVESTIGATE...


...ALTHOUGH I'D GUESS THEY PROBABLY HAVE SOMETHING DO WITH IT, DON'T YOU THINK?


AJAK, WHO ARE THESE GUYS?
QUERYING THE ENCYCLOPEDIAE NOW. STAND BY.
IKARIS! YOU AND I TAKE POINT!
MAKKARI, FLANK THEM FROM THE RIGHT, AND ONCE THEY'RE WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE, ATTACK FROM THE REAR!
SERSI, I NEED YOU TO THROW UP SOME KIND OF COVER--




EEEEEEEE
KWAMM!


SPWOOSH!


UFF!
WHAM!
BRIGHTSWORD: Defender/Mover


ALL RIGHT.
OLYMPIA KNOWS THEM.
GIVE.


THEY'RE SUPERHUMANS--
NO, REALLY. YOU THINK?
LET ME FINISH. ACCORDING TO OUR ARCHIVES WHEN THE FOURTH HOST OF CELESTIALS ADJUDGED EARTH WORTHY OF CONTINUED EXISTENCE...


...TWELVE HUMANS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE LEFT WITH THEM IN THEIR MOTHERSHIP.*
THESE "YOUNG GODS," AS THEY CALLED THEMSELVES, WERE EACH SUPPOSED TO REPRESENT ONE OF THE HIGHEST ACHIEVEMENTS OF MANKIND.
BUT WITH ONE OR TWO EXCEPTIONS, ONCE THEY DEPARTED THE SOLAR SYSTEM...
...THEY WERE NEVER HEARD FROM AGAIN.
* THOR #300

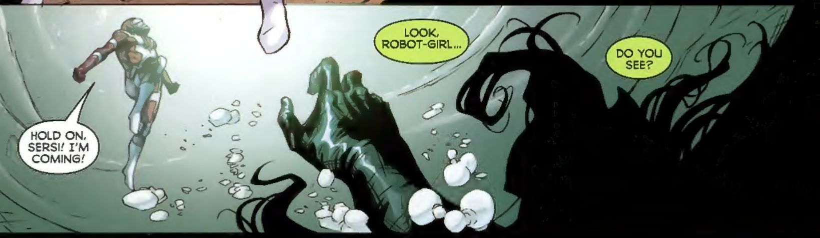
KSSSSSHHH!
WAIT...
...YOU SAID TWELVE?
YES.
WHOOMMM!
I ONLY COUNTED SIX UP THERE.
ME, TOO.






"YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?"


MAKKARI! HELP!
HELP ME!


HOLD ON, SERSI! I'M COMING!
LOOK, ROBOT-GIRL...
DO YOU SEE?

YOUR LOVE IS *LEAVING* YOU.
SEA WITCH: Mover/Manipulator
YOUR LOVE IS *RUNNING AWAY...*





NOT EVEN YOUR *EYEBEAMS* CAN PENETRATE ITS PSYCHIC SHIELDING.

AND IF YOU TRIED, I COULD TELEPATHICALLY SUMMON ANY OF MY FELLOW YOUNG GODS IN AN *INSTANT*. OUR MINDS ARE ALL LINKED AS *ONE*.

VARUA: Teller/Knower

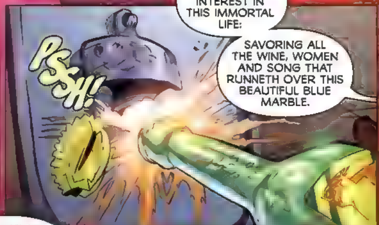
WE *PREPARED* FOR YOU ROBOTS. WE KNEW YOUR INHUMAN CONSCIOUSNESSES WOULD BE THE ONLY ONES ON EARTH UNMOVED BY OUR *CALL*.

WE DEVELOPED A STRATEGY TO *COUNTER* ALL YOUR POWERS. YOU *CANNOT* DEFEAT US.



I'M NO FIGHTER.
NOT MUCH OF A SPY EITHER, TRUTH BE TOLD.





SO WHEN DRUIG ASKED ME TO COME TO MADRIPOOR...
...I KNEW I SIMPLY HAD TO SAMPLE WHAT ALL THE GUIDEBOOKS CALL THE BEST A LA CARTE SUSHI BAR IN THE PACIFIC RIM.









"...WHY?"
SSSH... GO TO SLEEP, PRETTY DOLL...
YOU HAVE NO REASON TO *FIGHT.*
NOT WITHOUT *LOVE...*
KKK
LET ME GUESS. YOU HAVE TOTAL CONTROL OVER WATER.
BUT NOT *SILICON?* TCH.
MAKES YOU KIND OF A *ONE-TRICK PONY,* DON'T IT?
AND SERSI THINKS WHAT SERSI ALWAYS THINKS, WHICH IS:
EEEEEEEE
HIGHNOTE: Teller/Defender
BOOM!
"WHY CAN'T WE ALL JUST *GET ALONG?*
"THE FIGHTING--THERE *IS* NO REASON FOR IT. THERE'S NEVER *BEEN* A REASON. THERE NEVER *WILL* BE A REASON."
THERE-- THENA--
"IT'S ONE THING FOR *HUMANS* TO NEVER LEARN THAT--THEIR LIFESPANS ARE SO SHORT, YOU TURN YOUR HEAD FOR JUST A MOMENT, AND AN ENTIRE *GENERATION* HAS GONE BY."
I DISINTEGRATED ALL THE *AIR* AROUND HIM! YOUR FRIEND, UP THERE, WON'T BE ABLE TO--

THANKS.

"BUT WHY CAN'T THE **OTHER** ETERNALS DUMB OUT WHAT I'VE KNOWN SINCE THE **PLEISTOCENE?"**

THENA!!

KRRAAKK!

WAS THAT **NECESSARY?** YOU COULD HAVE JUST--

THAT UNI-MIND THING THEY CREATED IS GOING TO ABSORB EVERY HUMAN MIND ON EARTH!

THAT MEANS JOEY IS IN DANGER. MY **SON!**

HE'S **NOT** YOUR SON.

EXCUSE ME?

YOU USE JOEY AS A JUSTIFICATION FOR **EVERYTHING,** BUT HE'S NOT EVEN BIOLOGICALLY RELATED TO YOU-- **US.**

ONLY THE PRIME ETERNAL CAN CHOOSE WHICH AMONG US **REPRODUCES.** AND ZURAS HASN'T ALLOWED--

AND THENA THINKS WHAT THENA ALWAYS THINKS, WHICH IS:

"YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. NONE OF YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT IT'S LIKE.

"AND THE SADDEST THING IS...

"...YOU'LL NEVER KNOW HOW **MEANINGLESS** MY FIRST MILLION YEARS OF LIFE WERE BEFORE JOEY CAME INTO IT."


OH, AND SHE ALSO THINKS:
"YOU'VE ALWAYS DRESSED LIKE A WHORE."


!
CHK
CHK CHK CHK


KRR
NCHHHH
AH, YOU CAN TRANSMUTE MATTER, TOO.
DIDN'T ANYONE EVER TELL YOU ROCK BREAKS SCISSORS?
GENII: Maker/Teller


I HEARD PAPER COVERS ROCK.
MAKERS' DUEL, HUH?
ONLY WAY THROUGH ME, HONEY.
SWEET. HAVEN'T BEEN IN ONE OF THESE SINCE I WIPED THE FLOOR OF ELIZABETH I'S SUMMER PALACE WITH JOHN DEE.


SAY... THESE GUYS AT THIS REALLY HOOHAH GARDEN PARTY I WENT TO ON THE UMBRIA-TUSCANY BORDER... CAN'T REMEMBER WHERE, EXACTLY...
...THEY TAUGHT ME A NEW SPIN ON THIS ONE:
SAMURAI HARI-KARIS PAPER!

AT FIRST SIMPLY BEING *CHOSEN* TO GO INTO SPACE WITH THE FOURTH HOST WAS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT TO OVERFLOW OUR DAYS AND NIGHTS WITH JOY.

"AT FIRST

"THEN WE BEGAN TO GROW INCREASINGLY *ANXIOUS* TO LEARN WHICH *GREAT TASKS* THE SPACE GODS WOULD HAVE US DO...








AND MAKKARI THINKS WHAT MAKKARI ALWAYS THINKS, WHICH IS:


"I WONDER."
WHERE--?
MOONSTALKER: Teller/Mover
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH SERSI?
WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO KNOW! HA, HA, HA!


"WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE WOULD DO THIS TO AN ENTIRE COUNTRY--TO CHILDREN? THE ELDERLY?
"NOT THIS ONE, CERTAINLY?
"SHE'S NO MORE THAN A CHILD HERSELF.


"BUT... IF THESE POWERS COULD BE HARNESSED... CONSCIOUSNESS COULD BE DRAWN FROM THE BODY HARMLESSLY..."
SKREEEEEEEE!
"...AS A LOW COST, POWER--AND SIDE-REACTION-FREE ALTERNATIVE TO ANESTHESIA... THINK OF ALL THE GOOD IT COULD DO HOSPITALS IN THE THIRD WORLD..."


AJAK...?
YES, MAKKARI?
THIS WOMAN'S VITALS SEEM TO BE FADING FAST TO ME...

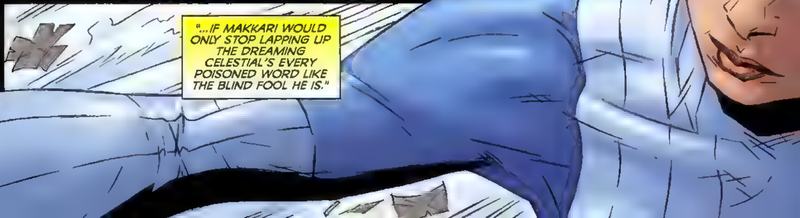

YES. ACCORDING TO MY READINGS, I'M AFRAID THE MADRIPOORIANS' BODIES WON'T LAST LONG WITHOUT THEIR PSYCHES. YOU HAVE ABOUT AN HOUR BEFORE THEY EXPIRE.
OH, AND NORTHERN AUSTRALIA IS BEING ABSORBED INTO THE UNI-MIND. N.A.T.O. CHATTER IS LEANING TOWARD AIR STRIKES.
GOOD LORD...


AND AJAK THINKS WHAT AJAK ALWAYS THINKS, WHICH IS:
MAKKARI
"GODS, HOW I HATE MAKKARI.
"WERE IT NOT FOR HIM, I COULD MAKE IKARIS AND THE OTHERS SEE THAT THE CELESTIALS WERE RIGHT TO IMPRISON THE DREAMING ONE HERE.


"THAT IT HAS BEEN CORRUPTED AND NEVER SHOULD HAVE BEEN AWAKENED IN THE FIRST PLACE."
KWAMMM!


YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE FAST ONE?
PATHETIC!
YEAH? YOU WANNA RACE?
"I COULD MAKE IKARIS SEE THAT...


OKAY.
LET'S RACE.


"...IF MAKKARI WOULD ONLY STOP LAPPING UP THE DREAMING CELESTIAL'S EVERY POISONED WORD LIKE THE BLIND FOOL HE IS."


WAIT, I HEARD THIS ONE TOO.
LION EATS SAMURAI.
GUN SHOOTS LION.

WHOSE HOUSE PARTY WAS I AT?
JACK NICHOLSON'S? WARREN BUFFET'S? NO...
METEOR SHOWER CRUSHES GUN.
OH... WAIT...


...I REMEMBER!



IT WAS TERRY GILLIAM'S.
WHOA.
I--I SAW--
THENA KILLED YOU--
EEEEEEEE-BOOM!

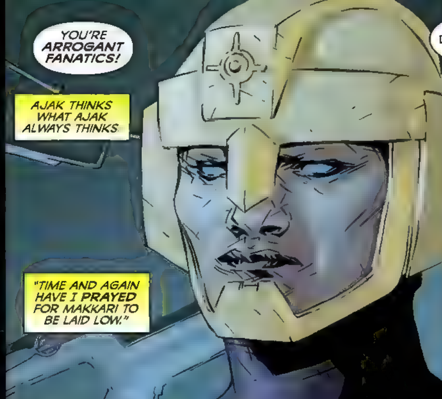

I GOT SOME BAD NEWS FOR YOU, LADY!
YOU HUMANS *TIRE*. I *DON'T!*


THIS LITTLE RELAY WAS OVER BEFORE IT EVEN--

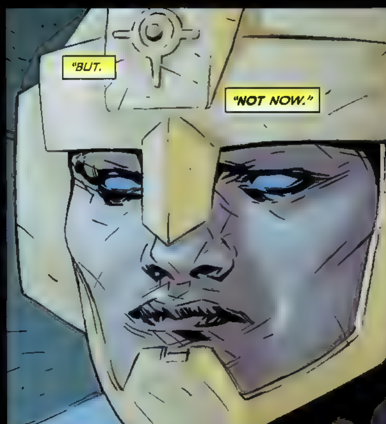

GAAAGH!!
I'D STOP *STRUGGLING* IF I WERE YOU. YOU'RE JUST GENERATING MORE KINETIC ENERGY FOR MY SPORES TO FEED ON.


I SHOULD KNOW-- I GENETICALLY ENGINEERED THEM WITH MY OWN TWO HANDS.
HARVEST: Maker/Mover
LOOK, MAKKARI. WE JUST WANT TO *TALK*. WE KNOW YOU'RE NOT LIKE THOSE *OTHER* ROBOTS.
WE KNOW THE DEVIANTS SAY YOU ARE *SKADRACH*-- POSSESSED BY THE SPIRIT OF THE *CELESTIALS*.
YOU'LL UNDERSTAND WHAT WE'RE DOING...

"...IF WE ONLY SHOW YOU."
YOU SEE, SKADRACH?
YOU SEE HOW MISGUIDED YOU ETERNALS ARE TO FIGHT US?
ALL WE ARE DOING IS TAKING HUMANITY TO THE NEXT LEVEL.
UNIFYING THE RACE.
NO MORE PREJUDICES. NO MORE CONFLICT. NO MORE HAVE'S AND HAVE-NOT'S. NO MORE US AND THEM.
THAT'S WHY WE CHOSE MADRIPOOR AS THE POINT OF ASCENSION, WHERE RICH AND POOR ARE SO RIGIDLY DIVIDED BETWEEN HIGHTOWN AND LOWTOWN.
JUST THE TERRAN.
BUT SOON THERE WILL BE JUST THE ONE.
I... DON'T UNDERSTAND.
YOU'RE MAKING... A CELESTIAL?
OF COURSE. WHAT DID YOU THINK CELESTIALS WERE?
THEY ARE UNI-MINDS OF ENTIRE PLANETS, CLAD IN ARMOR.
CALCULUS: Knower/Defender
SPLICE: Maker/Manipulator
AND ONCE ALL OF HUMANITY HAS MERGED AS ONE, WE WILL PLACE IT INTO ITS NEW HOME--THIS SHELL WE HAVE CONSTRUCTED FOR IT.
AND THE CELESTIAL KNOWN AS TERRAN WILL TAKE HIS/HER RIGHTFUL PLACE AMONG THE FIFTH HOST.
I'VE NEVER HEARD ANY OF THIS BEFORE. YOU KNOW THIS IS TRUE?
VARUA HAD THE INSIGHT. SHE IS VERY GIFTED.
YOU'RE KILLING THESE PEOPLE--AN ENTIRE PLANET--TO TEST SOME EXPERIMENTAL THEOLOGY?
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO IMPOSE YOUR BELIEFS ON THE WHOLE WORLD!
WHAT? OF COURSE WE DO.
WE'RE GODS.
NO...


YOU'RE ARROGANT FANATICS!
AJAK THINKS WHAT AJAK ALWAYS THINKS.
"TIME AND AGAIN HAVE I PRAYED FOR MAKKARI TO BE LAID LOW."


YOU DISAPPOINT US.
WE FEARED YOU ETERNALS WOULD BE UNABLE TO ACCEPT THAT YOUR SERVICES WERE NO LONGER NEEDED.
"I HAVE YEARNED FOR HIS COMEUPPANCE SO FERVENTLY IT HAS MADE EVERY CELL IN MY BODY ACHE.


"BUT.
"NOT NOW."


WE HOPED YOU WOULD BE THE EXCEPTION, SKADRACH.
AKK
BUT, SINCE YOU CLEARLY ARE NOT...
...WE CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO COMPLICATE THE FINAL PHASES OF HUMANITY'S ASCENSION.


"NOT LIKE THIS.


"NOT AT THE HANDS OF HERETICS WORSE THAN HE.
"TWO BLASPHEMIES DON'T MAKE A TRUTH."





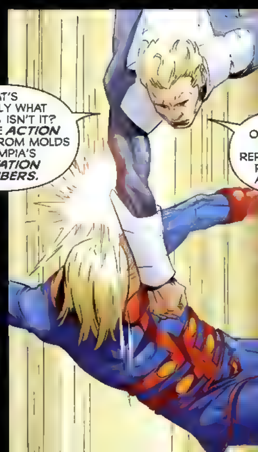
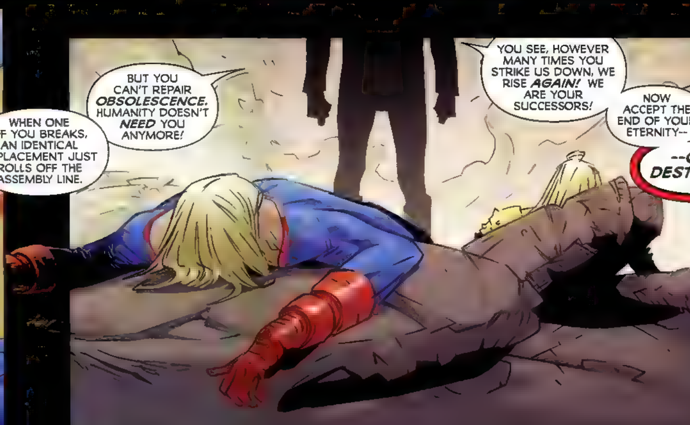
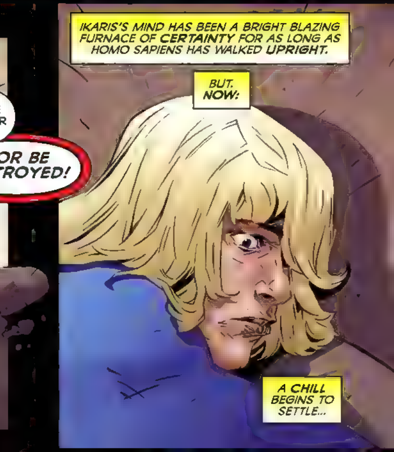


OF COURSE.
OF COURSE I AM.


THENA?
DAD? WHERE'S AJAK?
HE ASKED ME TO TELEPORT HIM TO YOU, TO MADRIPOOR, TO HELP MAKKARI.
I'VE TAKEN OVER THE MONITORING FROM HIM, AND...
...WELL, I THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW...
SPIT IT OUT, DAD! KINDA BUSY HERE!!

OLYMPIA PICKED UP RED ARMY TRANSMISSIONS. THE UNI-MIND HAS BEGUN TO ABSORB HONG KONG.
THE P.R.C. JUST TARGETED MADRIPOOR WITH THREE DF-5 I.C.B.M.'S FROM A BASE IN WUZHAI. THE COUNTDOWN IS AT T-MINUS THIRTY.
ZURAS: Prime Eternal

UM...
...IS THERE A BUTTON HERE THAT WILL STOP THAT...?
IKARIS, ZURAS SAYS TIME IS RUNNING OUT--
ONLY FOR YOUR KIND, ROBOT!

WHY DO YOU INSIST ON CALLING US ROBOTS?!
EEEYAARRR!!

THAT'S BASICALLY WHAT YOU ARE, ISN'T IT? BAKED LIKE ACTION FIGURES FROM MOLDS IN OLYMPIA'S ACTIVATION CHAMBERS.
WHEN ONE OF YOU BREAKS, AN IDENTICAL REPLACEMENT JUST ROLLS OFF THE ASSEMBLY LINE.

BUT YOU CAN'T REPAIR OBSOLESCENCE. HUMANITY DOESN'T NEED YOU ANYMORE!
YOU SEE, HOWEVER MANY TIMES YOU STRIKE US DOWN, WE RISE AGAIN! WE ARE YOUR SUCCESSORS!
NOW ACCEPT THE END OF YOUR ETERNITY--
--OR BE DESTROYED!

IKARIS'S MIND HAS BEEN A BRIGHT BLAZING FURNACE OF CERTAINTY FOR AS LONG AS HOMO SAPIENS HAS WALKED UPRIGHT.
BUT. NOW:
A CHILL BEGINS TO SETTLE...

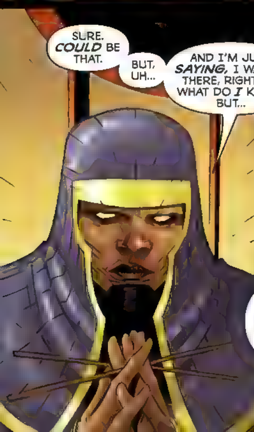

I FEAR, IN OUR BOREDOM AND OUR FRUSTRATION AND OUR ISOLATION...
...WE ALL WENT A LITTLE MAD.


"WE TRIED ONE DESPERATE PLOY AFTER ANOTHER TO ATTRACT THE CELESTIALS' ATTENTION.
"VICIOUS BATTLES...


"...DECADENT BACCHANALS.
"BUT STILL...


"...NOTHING.
"FINALLY... IT CAME TO ME. THEIR SILENCE WAS THEIR ANSWER!"


THE CELESTIALS MADE US GODS NOT SO WE COULD FOLLOW THEM, BUT SO WE COULD LEAD OUR PEOPLE!
WE WERE MEANT TO RETURN HERE AND SHOW EARTHMEN THEIR TRUE PATH! IT WAS SO OBVIOUS!


SURE. COULD BE THAT.
BUT, UH...
AND I'M JUST SAYING, I WASN'T THERE, RIGHT, SO WHAT DO I KNOW, BUT...

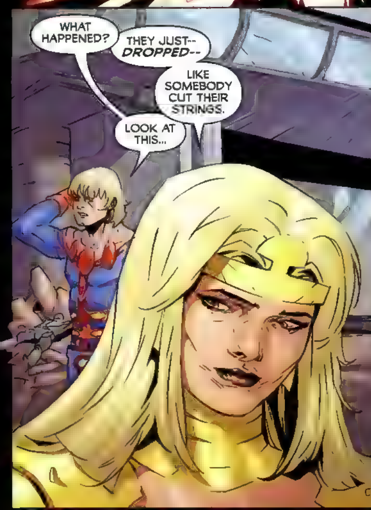

MAYBE JUST GIVING YOU THE POWER WAS THE TEST.
THEY WANTED TO SEE WHAT HUMANITY WOULD DO WITH GODHOOD.
WOULD THEY ACT IN A WISE WAY, A CAUTIOUS WAY, KNOWING THAT THEIR FOOTPRINTS WERE NOW THOSE OF GIANTS...

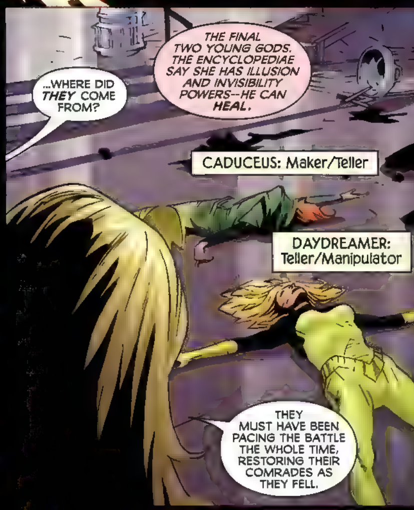

...OR WOULD THEIR HEIGHTENED SENSE OF THEIR OWN NECESSITY MAKE THEM NARCISSISTICALLY PROJECT WHAT THEY WANTED ONTO THE WORLD?
WOULD GREAT POWER INVENT GREAT RESPONSIBILITY?
PERHAPS THE REASON FOR THE CELESTIALS' SILENCE WAS THAT WHAT THEY REALLY WANTED YOU TO DO...
...WAS NOTHING?


DO YOU THINK...
DO YOU THINK THAT'S POSSIBLE?
AND LEGBA THINKS WHAT LEGBA ALWAYS THINKS, WHICH IS:


"GOTCHA."


TSK.
SO BEAUTIFUL.
SUCH A WASTE.


WHAT HAPPENED?
THEY JUST-- DROPPED--
LIKE SOMEBODY CUT THEIR STRINGS.
LOOK AT THIS...


...WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?
THE FINAL TWO YOUNG GODS. THE ENCYCLOPEDIAE SAY SHE HAS ILLUSION AND INVISIBILITY POWERS--HE CAN HEAL.
CADUCEUS: Maker/Teller
DAYDREAMER: Teller/Manipulator
THEY MUST HAVE BEEN PACING THE BATTLE THE WHOLE TIME, RESTORING THEIR COMRADES AS THEY FELL.


I'M SURE DAYDREAMER CREATED THE ILLUSION OF MOONSTALKER RUNNING AWAY WITH SERSI, TOO.
WHAT DO WE DO WITH THEM?
I'D RECOMMEND BREAKING THEM DOWN TO THEIR COMPONENT ATOMS AND BRINGING THEM BACK TO OLYMPIA FOR STUDY.


THAT, OR TOSS THEM INTO THE SEA.
HAH!
I WOULDN'T RESURRECT THAT VARUA IF I WERE YOU.
SHE HAS VISION. IT MAKES HER DANGEROUS.
YOU TOOK CARE OF HER, LEGBA?
SHE TOOK CARE OF HERSELF.


ONCE, I WAS SHARING A BUCKET OF POTATOES WITH MARK TWAIN ON HIS PORCH IN STAMFORD AND HE TOLD ME IT'S NOT WHAT PEOPLE DON'T KNOW THAT HURTS THEM--
TO TOPPLE A CASTLE OF FAITH ALL YOU NEED IS THE TINIEST CRACK OF DOUBT IN THE FOUNDATION.
BUT WHAT THEY BELIEVE THEY KNOW IS TRUE, BUT ISN'T.


YOU SEE NOW, IKARIS, WHY I FOLLOW DRUIG?
HE MAY BE A CHEAT AND A LIAR...
...BUT AT LEAST HE'S HONEST WITH HIMSELF.


AND IKARIS THINKS.
AND IKARIS THINKS.
AND IKARIS THINKS.
END


Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE YOUNG GODS™ FACT PAGES!
ONE THOUSAND YEARS AGO, THE OLD GODS OF EARTH JOINED TO PREPARE FOR THE EVENTUAL RETURN OF THE CELESTIALS-- SUPERBEINGS WHOSE PLAN TO JUDGE HUMANITY THREATENED MANKIND'S VERY EXISTENCE.
OVER A SPAN OF TEN CENTURIES, THE GODS CHOSE TWELVE ORDINARY MEN AND WOMEN WHOSE SKILLS REPRESENTED THE TWELVE GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS OF MAN.
ENDOWING THESE HUMANS WITH GODLIKE POWERS, THE OLD GODS OFFERED THE TWELVE SUPRA-HUMANS TO THE CELESTIALS AS PROOF OF MANKIND'S WORTHINESS TO SURVIVE.
FOR REASONS OF THEIR OWN, INCOMPREHEN-SIBLE EVEN TO GODS, THE CELESTIALS "ADOPTED" THE TWELVE SUPRAHUMANS, TAKING THEM ABOARD THE CELESTIAL MOTHERSHIP--
--WHERE THEY HAVE REMAINED IN CONSTANT TRAINING, LEARNING THE ETHOS OF GOD-HOOD.
NOW, PERHAPS, THEY ARE READY TO RETURN TO THE WORLD THAT GAVE THEM BIRTH.
BUT IS THE WORLD READY FOR THEM...?

MOONSTALKER

HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT: HUNTER

POWER: HYPER-SPEED AND STEALTH, THE ABILITY TO VISUALLY BLEND WITH HER SURROUNDINGS IN COMPLETE CAMOUFLAGE.

PREVIOUS HUMAN IDENTITY: KIANA, A 16-YEAR OLD INUPIAT WOMAN FROM 11TH CENTURY ALASKA-- QUIET, INTENSE, MOODY BUT WITH A RAUCOUS SENSE OF HUMOR THAT POPS OUT AT SOMETIMES INOPPORTUNE MOMENTS.

VARUA

HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT: PRIESTESS

POWER: MISTRESS OF THE UNI-MIND (IN WHICH THE YOUNG GODS MIND-MELD, BECOMING A GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS); TELEPATHY AND TELEPORTATION.

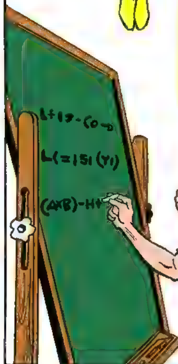
PREVIOUS HUMAN IDENTITY: MIRA, A POLYNESIAN GIRL (14 YEARS OLD) FROM RUK ISLAND, BORN IN 1405 BEFORE THE COMING OF WHITE MEN TO THE PACIFIC--A STERN, DIRECTIVE TEENAGE GIRL, VERY TAKE CHARGE, AND NOT AT ALL **OBVIOUSLY** "SPIRITUAL" (THOUGH IN FACT, SHE'S VERY SPIRITUAL INDEED).

CALCULUS

HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT: SCIENTIST

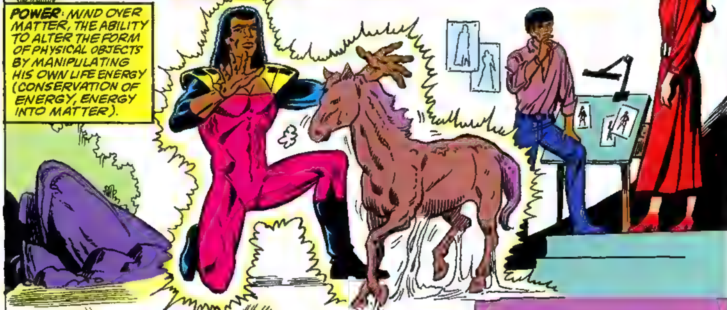
POWER: INSTANT CALCULATION AND ANALYSIS OF PROBABILITIES (ALMOST, BUT NOT QUITE PRECOGNITION); A MASTER-PLANNER AND TELEPATH.

PREVIOUS HUMAN IDENTITY: 20 YEAR-OLD **JAWAHARAL PATEL**, A HINDU OF THE BRAHMIN CASTE, BORN IN 1928 AND "ADOPTED" BY THE GODS OF THE HINDU PANTHEON THE YEAR INDIA ACHIEVED INDEPENDENCE -- A GENTLE SOUL, THOUGHTFUL AND LOVING, UNWILLING TO SEE EVIL IN ANYONE, A TRAIT WHICH CAN LEAD TO WEAKNESS.

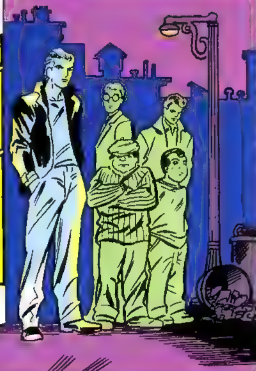


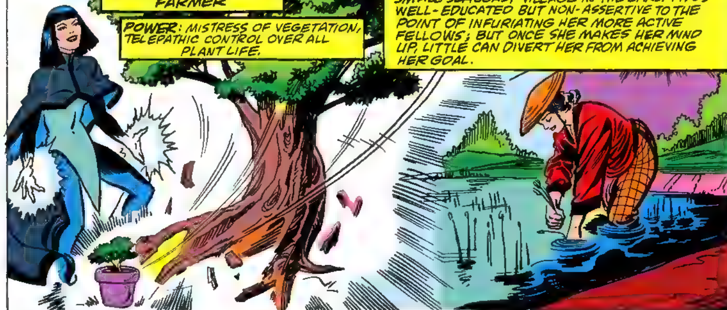





GENII
HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT: ARTIST
POWER: MIND OVER MATTER, THE ABILITY TO ALTER THE FORM OF PHYSICAL OBJECTS BY MANIPULATING HIS OWN LIFE ENERGY (CONSERVATION OF ENERGY, ENERGY INTO MATTER).
PREVIOUS HUMAN IDENTITY: 26-YEAR OLD JASON KIMBAL, HARLEM RESIDENT FROM THE EARLY 1970'S, A FASHION DESIGNER WHOSE CAREER ENDED AFTER A BOUT WITH COMPULSIVE GAMBLING -- A RISK-TAKER, MANIC-DEPRESSIVE, SOMEWHAT SELF-DESTRUCTIVE.




CADUCEUS
HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT: PHYSICIAN
POWER: MASTER OF HEALING AND TELEKINETIC MUTATION, THE ABILITY TO STRENGTHEN AND TRANSFORM LIVING THINGS.
PREVIOUS HUMAN IDENTITY: MARK CADMON, 30 YEAR-OLD MAN FROM 1919 CHICAGO, ROUGH AND TUMBLE TOUGH-GUY WHOSE WISECRACKING MANNER CONCEALS A HARD-AS-NAILS HEART.


HARVEST
HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT: FARMER
POWER: MISTRESS OF VEGETATION, TELEPATHIC CONTROL OVER ALL PLANT LIFE.
PREVIOUS HUMAN IDENTITY: CHI LO, A 19-YEAR OLD JAPANESE WOMAN FROM A SMALL SEACOAST VILLAGE IN THE EARLY 1970'S -- WELL-EDUCATED BUT NON-ASSERTIVE TO THE POINT OF INFURIATING HER MORE ACTIVE FELLOWS; BUT ONCE SHE MAKES HER MIND UP, LITTLE CAN DIVERT HER FROM ACHIEVING HER GOAL.

BRIGHT SWORD
HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT: **WARRIOR**
POWER: PHYSICAL INDESTRUCTIBILITY, HYPER-STRENGTH, MASTER OF ALL WEAPONRY (HUMAN AND ALIEN).

PREVIOUS HUMAN IDENTITY: CARTER DYAM, 24 YEAR-OLD ISRAELI SOLDIER FROM THE EARLY 1970s -- DISILLUSIONED BY WAR, EVEN MORE DISILLUSIONED BY PEOPLE; BELIEVES FORCE IS THE ONLY WAY TO ACHIEVE A NOBLE END.

MINDSINGER
HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT: POET
POWER: TELEPATHY AND TRANS-SUBSTANTIATION -- THE ABILITY TO TRANSFORM HIMSELF INTO OTHER OBJECTS. **PREVIOUS HUMAN IDENTITY**: 28 YEAR-OLD **GREGOR BUHKAROV**, 18TH CENTURY RUSSIAN STUDENT FROM KIEV -- A DARK, SULLEN MAN GIVEN TO BLACK RAGES ALTERNATING WITH CHEERFUL OUTBURSTS OF SONG AND WILD ENTHUSIASMS.

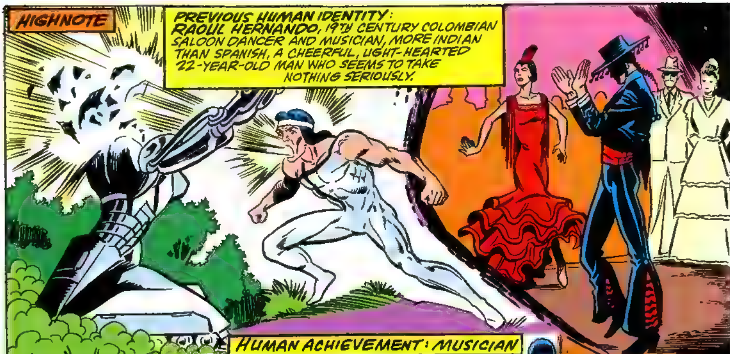


SEA WITCH

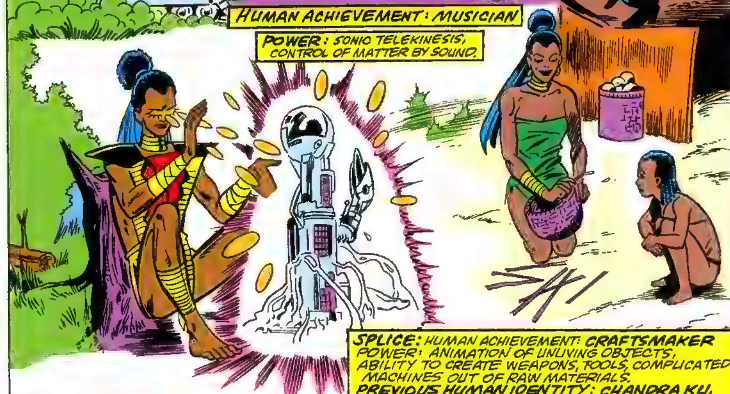
HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT: SAILOR

POWER: AMPHIBIAN, TELEKINETIC MANIPULATION OF WATER IN ALL ITS FORMS (LIQUID, SOLID, GASEOUS).

PREVIOUS HUMAN IDENTITY: BRIDGIT O'HARE, 12TH CENTURY IRISH GIRL OF 17, A WILD HOT-TEMPERED AND LUSTY WENCH WHOSE OUTWARDLY PASSIONATE NATURE MAY MASK A FEAR OF MEN.

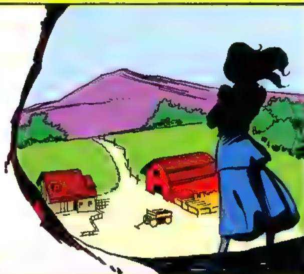


HIGHNOTE
PREVIOUS HUMAN IDENTITY: RAOUL HERNANDO, 19TH CENTURY COLOMBIAN SALOON DANCER AND MUSICIAN, MORE INDIAN THAN SPANISH, A CHEERFUL, LIGHT-HEARTED 22-YEAR-OLD MAN WHO SEEMS TO TAKE NOTHING SERIOUSLY.
HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT: MUSICIAN
POWER: SONIC TELEKINESIS, CONTROL OF MATTER BY SOUND.



SPLICE: HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT: CRAFTSMAKER
POWER: ANIMATION OF UNLIVING OBJECTS, ABILITY TO CREATE WEAPONS, TOOLS, COMPLICATED MACHINES OUT OF RAW MATERIALS.
PREVIOUS HUMAN IDENTITY: CHANDRA KU, 18TH CENTURY ZULU GIRL OF 13--RARELY SPEAKS PREFERS MEDITATION TO HUMAN COMPANY, EXTREMELY LONELY, WITH NO FRIENDS AMONG THE OTHER GODS; THE ONLY ONE OF THEM WHO SEEMS TO TAKE NOTHING SERIOUSLY.





DAYDREAMER. HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT: PHILOSOPHER. POWER: LIMITED PRECOGNITION, VERBAL AND TELEPATHIC THOUGHT CONTROL; THE ABILITY TO CREATE "VISIONS." PREVIOUS HUMAN IDENTITY: CATHERINE MORANIS, 19TH CENTURY 25-YEAR-OLD FARM WOMAN FROM OTTOWA, CANADA. A MILD, DREAMY WOMAN WITH A SPINE OF TEMPERED STEEL.

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE ETERNALS!™

EDITED, WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY: JACK KIRBY • INKED AND ENJOYED BY: MICHAEL ROYER

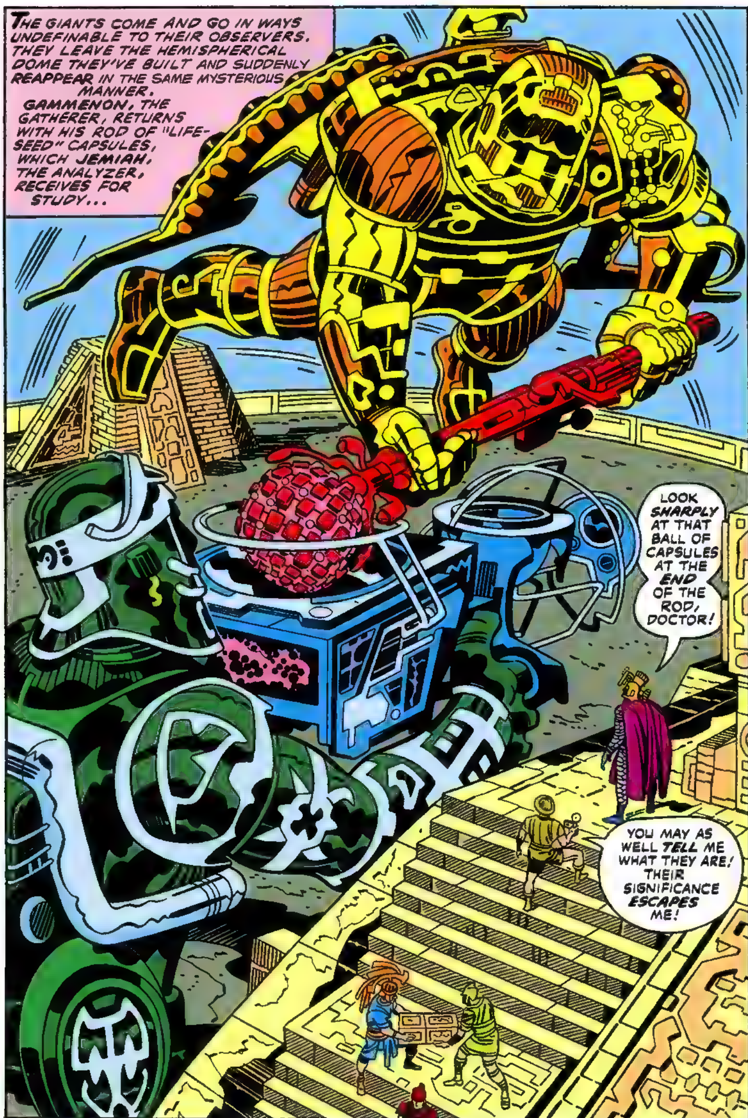
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THEY CAME BACK?? THE ANCIENT CARVINGS OF THE INCAS NOT ONLY LEFT A RECORD OF THE SPACE GODS, BUT ALSO PREDICTED THEIR RETURN TO EARTH ... IN THIS MAGAZINE THE PREDICTION COMES TRUE!!! A MASSIVE SPACE VEHICLE HAS ESTABLISHED A BASE ON A BROAD PLAIN IN THE ANDES MOUNTAINS... AND NOW, AMID THE INCA RUINS... GIANTS WALK!! --AWESOME BEINGS-- WITH A PURPOSE THAT COULD DECIDE THE FATE OF ALL HUMANITY!!!

THE FOURTH HOST

LIVING HERE AMONG THESE COSMIC BEINGS IS THE *OPPORTUNITY* OF A LIFETIME, *AJAK!* MY LEARNED COLLEAGUES WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO BE IN *MY* PLACE

REMEMBER, DOCTOR DAMIAN, THE *CELESTIALS* ARE STUDYING *US*, AS WELL!!

LETTERED BY: M. ROYER
COLORED BY: GLYNIS WEIN


THE GIANTS COME AND GO IN WAYS UNDEFINABLE TO THEIR OBSERVERS. THEY LEAVE THE HEMISPHERICAL DOME THEY'VE BUILT AND SUDDENLY REAPPEAR IN THE SAME MYSTERIOUS MANNER.
GAMMENON, THE GATHERER, RETURNS WITH HIS ROD OF "LIFE-SEED" CAPSULES, WHICH JEMIAH, THE ANALYZER, RECEIVES FOR STUDY...
LOOK SHARPLY AT THAT BALL OF CAPSULES AT THE END OF THE ROD, DOCTOR!
YOU MAY AS WELL TELL ME WHAT THEY ARE! THEIR SIGNIFICANCE ESCAPES ME!

THE CELESTIALS CALL THE CAPSULES "LIFE-SEEDS". IN SHORT, DOCTOR THOSE CAPSULES ARE THE STORED ATOMS OF LIVING ORGANISMS!!

GAMMENON HAS BEEN GATHERING SAMPLES OF THE LOCAL ANIMAL AND PLANT LIFE!

I-IS IT POSSIBLE THAT SOME OF THOSE CAPSULES MAY BE THE COMPACTED ATOMS OF HUMAN BEINGS?!

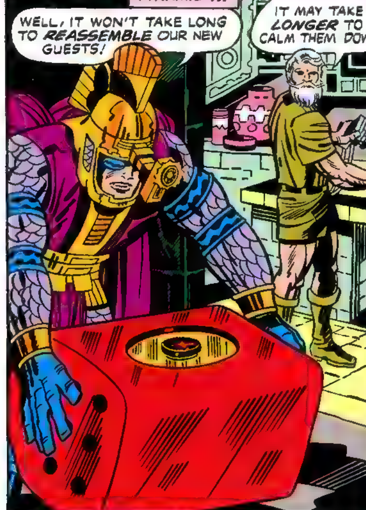
THE MASSIVE FORM OF GAMMENON SLOWLY WHEELS TO FACE THE TINY ONLOOKERS. DOCTOR DAMIAN RECOILS AS THE GIANT'S SHADOW FALLS UPON THE INCA PYRAMID. HIS LOWERING ARM HOVERS LIKE A SUSPENDED MOUNTAIN! HIS FINGERS CLUTCH A CAPSULE WHICH IS HELD OUT TO THE MEN...

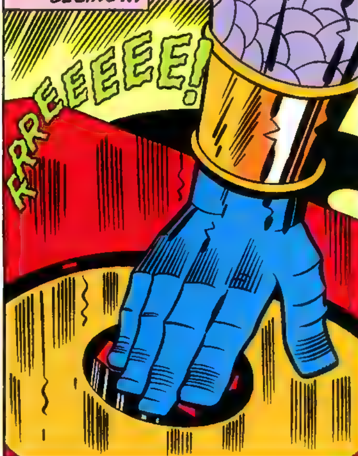
H-HE'S OFFERING ONE OF THE CAPSULES TO US!! I-I WONDER--!!

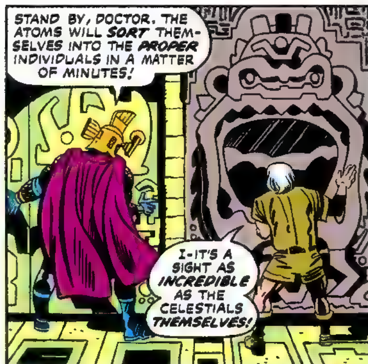
NEVER QUESTION OR REFUSE A CELESTIAL... ACCEPT THEM AS YOU WOULD THE WHIMSIES OF FATE!

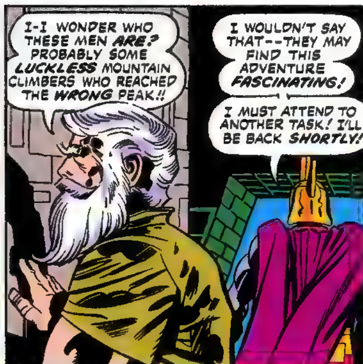

GAMMENON'S PALM OPENS AND RELEASES THE CAPSULE TO THE FAITHFUL LITTLE ADUUM, WHO KNOWS THAT IT CONTAINS THE ATOMS OF ITS KIND! THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE ADUUM ON THIS PLANET IS A NEVER-ENDING MARVEL...
I THANK YOU, GREAT CELESTIAL! IF IT IS YOUR WISH THAT I RECONSTRUCT THE ATOMS OF THESE MEN, THEN IT SHALL BE DONE
YOUR PURPOSE IS BENEVOLENT AND ABOVE QUESTION.
GOOD HEAVENS! YOU MEAN THAT THING CONTAINS--??


ADUUM IS THE CELESTIALS' WORD FOR "MAN"! MAN THE HUMAN-- MAN THE DEVIANT AND THE SPECIES KNOWN AS THE ETERNALS IT IS AJAK THE ETERNAL WHO HAS LEARNED TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE INCA SPACE GODS!!!
T-THESE CELESTIALS COLLECT MEN I-IN THE SAME MANNER IN WHICH THEY GATHER THE LOWER FORMS OF LIFE!! I-IT'S RATHER HUMILIATING YOU KNOW--
IT'S NECESSARY TO READJUST ONE'S PERSPECTIVE IN THE PRESENCE OF CELESTIALS!
YOU MUST REALIZE THAT THEY WERE ABROAD IN SPACE BEFORE OUR GALAXY WAS FORMED!

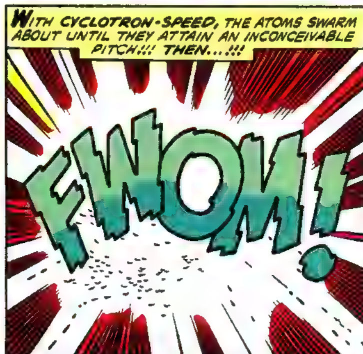

SOON, IN ONE OF THE CHAMBERS OF THE INCA PYRAMID...
WELL, IT WON'T TAKE LONG TO REASSEMBLE OUR NEW GUESTS!
IT MAY TAKE LONGER TO CALM THEM DOWN!


DEALING WITH HUMANS HAS ALWAYS BEEN A TOUCHY TASK, BUT AJAK DETERMINES TO TAKE IT IN STRIDE! HE PRESSES THE CAPSULE-ACTIVATOR AND THE ATOMIC REASSEMBLING PROCESS BEGINS...
FRREEEEEE!


STAND BY, DOCTOR. THE ATOMS WILL SORT THEMSELVES INTO THE PROPER INDIVIDUALS IN A MATTER OF MINUTES!
I-IT'S A SIGHT AS INCREDIBLE AS THE CELESTIALS THEMSELVES!

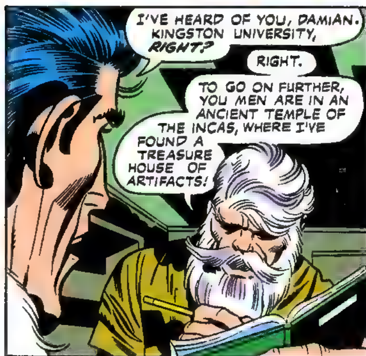

I-I WONDER WHO THESE MEN ARE? PROBABLY SOME LUCKLESS MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS WHO REACHED THE WRONG PEAK!!
I WOULDN'T SAY THAT--THEY MAY FIND THIS ADVENTURE FASCINATING!
I MUST ATTEND TO ANOTHER TASK! I'LL BE BACK SHORTLY!


MEANWHILE, BEHIND THE CHAMBER DOOR, THE CAPSULE RAPIDLY DISSOLVES IN THE DAZZLING 'FIRE OF' ATOM-FLOW...
RRREEEEE!!


WITH CYCLOTRON-SPEED, THE ATOMS SWARM ABOUT UNTIL THEY ATTAIN AN INCONCEIVABLE PITCH!!! THEN...!!!
FWOM!


THE NEXT MOMENT, THREE DAZED MEN STAND IN THE CHAMBER'S CENTER, TRYING TO MARSHALL THEIR SENSES...
TYLER! PARKS! Y-YOU GUYS OKAY?
STEVENSON! WHERE ARE WE?
AND WHERE IS THAT GIANT ALIEN!?

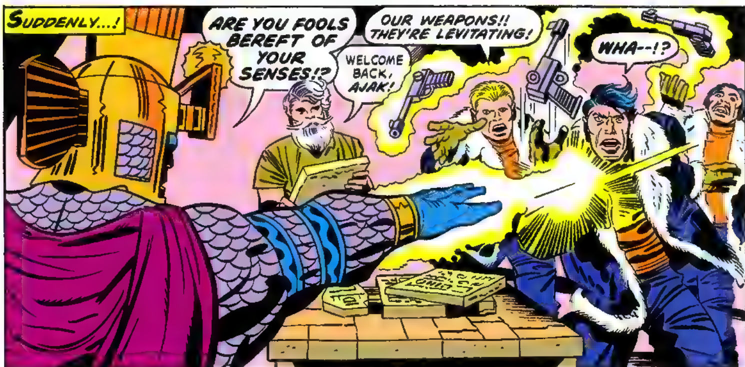

THE MEN OPEN THE CHAMBER DOOR AND FIND DOCTOR DAMIAN!
STEVENSON! LOOK!
A MAN! A PROFESSOR TYPE IF EVER I SAW ONE.
THERE'S NO SIGN OF THE GIANT!!
GENTLEMEN, GENTLEMEN! YOU MUST BE BURSTING WITH QUESTIONS... BUT FIRST, BE ASSURED THAT YOU'RE NOT IN ANY DANGER...
I'M DOCTOR DANIEL DAMIAN. I AM AN ARCHAEOLOGIST!

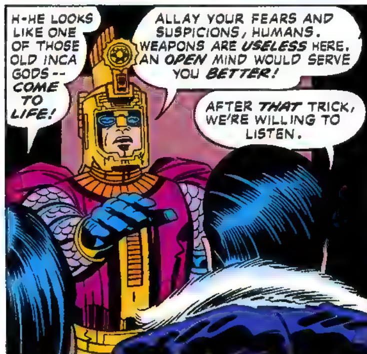

I'VE HEARD OF YOU, DAMIAN. KINGSTON UNIVERSITY, RIGHT?
RIGHT.
TO GO ON FURTHER, YOU MEN ARE IN AN ANCIENT TEMPLE OF THE INCAS, WHERE I'VE FOUND A TREASURE HOUSE OF ARTIFACTS!


DON'T FENCE WITH US. WE'RE INSIDE THE BASE OF THE GIANT ALIENS, AREN'T WE!?
YES... WE ARE. BUT DON'T BE TOO CERTAIN THAT THE CELESTIALS ARE AS ALIEN TO THIS PLANET AS YOU THINK!

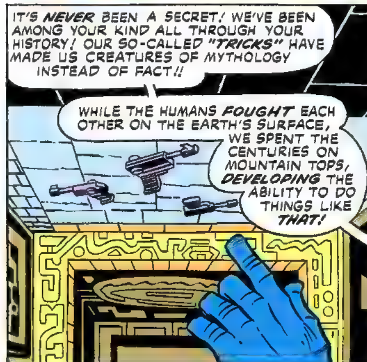

TELL US MORE, DOC! TELL US ALL YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE SPACE GIANTS!
THEN YOU'RE GOING TO SHOW US HOW TO LEAVE THIS PLACE WITH THE INFORMATION!
--UNDERSTAND, DOC?


WE'RE SHIELD OPERATIVES... AND WHAT WE LEARN HERE IS VITAL TO SECURITY!
IT'S VERY SERIOUS BUSINESS, DOC!
OF COURSE IT'S SERIOUS BUSINESS! GOOD LORD, BUT IT'S SERIOUS!
BUT THAT PISTOL IS NOT YOUR TICKET OUT OF THIS PLACE!


SUDDENLY...!
ARE YOU FOOLS BEREFT OF YOUR SENSES!?
WELCOME BACK, AJAK!
OUR WEAPONS!! THEY'RE LEVITATING!
WHA--!?


H-HE LOOKS LIKE ONE OF THOSE OLD INCA GODS -- COME TO LIFE!
ALLAY YOUR FEARS AND SUSPICIONS, HUMANS. WEAPONS ARE USELESS HERE. AN OPEN MIND WOULD SERVE YOU BETTER!
AFTER THAT TRICK, WE'RE WILLING TO LISTEN.


THEN LISTEN! I AM AJAK, AN ETERNAL!! MY SPECIES, LIKE YOURS, IS NATIVE TO EARTH. BUT WE LIVE LONGER THAN YOU. IN FACT, WE CANNOT DIE!
IF YOUR SPECIES DEVELOPED ON EARTH, IT'S BEEN THE GREATEST KEPT SECRET OF ALL TIME!
JUMPING CATFISH!!

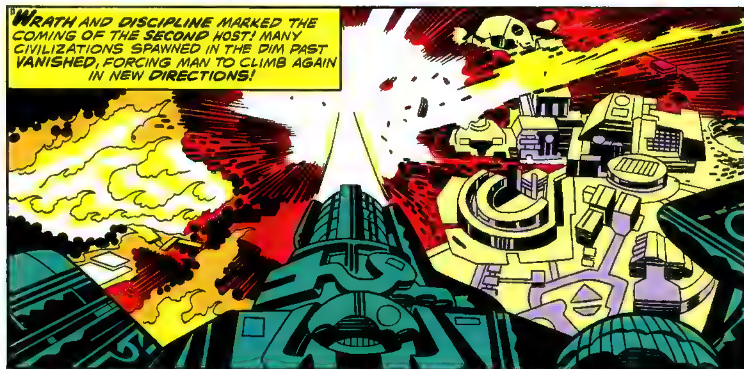

IT'S NEVER BEEN A SECRET! WE'VE BEEN AMONG YOUR KIND ALL THROUGH YOUR HISTORY! OUR SO-CALLED "TRICKS" HAVE MADE US CREATURES OF MYTHOLOGY INSTEAD OF FACT!!
WHILE THE HUMANS FOUGHT EACH OTHER ON THE EARTH'S SURFACE, WE SPENT THE CENTURIES ON MOUNTAIN TOPS, DEVELOPING THE ABILITY TO DO THINGS LIKE THAT!

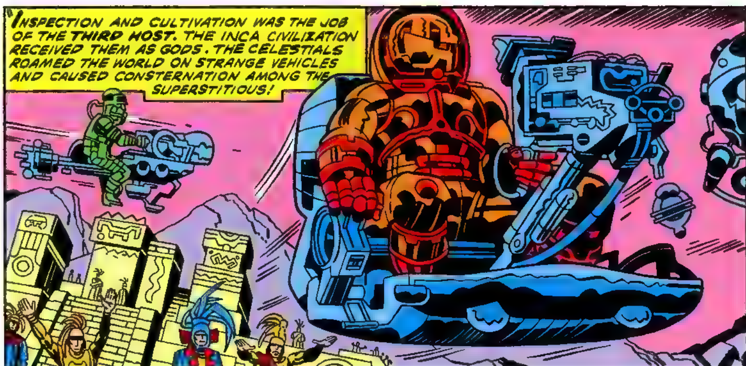

IT'S ALL VERY INTERESTING, AJAK! BUT OUR ASSIGNMENT IS TO GET FACTS ABOUT THE SPACE GIANTS AND CLEAR OUT!
AS A HUMAN BEING I'VE GOT TO WARN YOU THAT THIS IS NOT THE PLACE OR TIME FOR FOOL HEROICS!
AS AN AMERICAN, DAMIAN, YOU'VE GOT TO HELP US!
HE'S RIGHT, YOU KNOW!


DON'T YOU SEE WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO TELL YOU? WE'RE NOT CAPABLE OF MEASURING THE MIGHT OF THE CELESTIALS!! THEY ARE DOWNRIGHT INVINCIBLE!!
THEIR KIND IS AS OLD AS THE STARS!! THEIR HOME IS THE VAST UNIVERSE!


AS AN ETERNAL, I CAME HERE AMONG THE INCAS WHEN THEY WERE A GREAT POWER! I STAYED TO WITNESS THE ARRIVAL OF A CELESTIAL HOST ON EARTH.
AND WHEN THEY LEFT... I'D LEARNED MUCH--YET STILL VERY LITTLE...


"THE CELESTIALS VISIT A PLANET IN FOUR HOSTS. THE FIRST CAME TO EARTH BEFORE THERE WERE MEN UPON IT... BUT THEY DID FIND OUR COMMON ANCESTOR, WHO BECAME SUBJECT TO THEIR EXPERIMENTS...


"WRATH AND DISCIPLINE MARKED THE COMING OF THE SECOND HOST! MANY CIVILIZATIONS SPAWNED IN THE DIM PAST VANISHED, FORCING MAN TO CLIMB AGAIN IN NEW DIRECTIONS!


INSPECTION AND CULTIVATION WAS THE JOB OF THE THIRD HOST. THE INCA CIVILIZATION RECEIVED THEM AS GODS. THE CELESTIALS ROAMED THE WORLD ON STRANGE VEHICLES AND CAUSED CONSTERNATION AMONG THE SUPERSTITIOUS!


STRANGELY ENOUGH, A RED-BEARDED FELLOW AND MYSELF HELPED TO ORGANIZE THE FLIGHT CREWS THAT SERVICED THE CELESTIAL VEHICLES AND ARRANGED THEIR FLIGHT PLANS...
SAY NO MORE! I'LL BET THAT YOU AND REDBEARD BECAME LEGENDS TOO!
NEVER HEARD OF 'EM!


DOCTOR DAMIAN DOESN'T SHARE THAT VIEW! THE NAMES QUETZLECOATL AND TECUMOTZIN GOT HIM ALL WORKED UP!!
WHAT ARE YOUR NAMES?
I'M STEVENSON! THOSE TWO ARE TYLER AND PARKS!
HMPH!!


I MEANT FULL NAMES!
YOU'LL GET NO MORE THAN WHAT I GAVE YOU! THIS ISN'T A TEA PARTY! --AND WE DON'T PLAN ON STAYING LONG!!
THERE'S STILL AN ACE CARD TO BE PLAYED!!


STEVENSON'S LEFT HAND IS TIGHTLY CLENCHED AND HELD OUT OF SIGHT BEHIND HIS BACK! IF THERE IS AN ACE CARD, IT IS HIDDEN IN HIS FIST-- AND READY TO BE USED!!

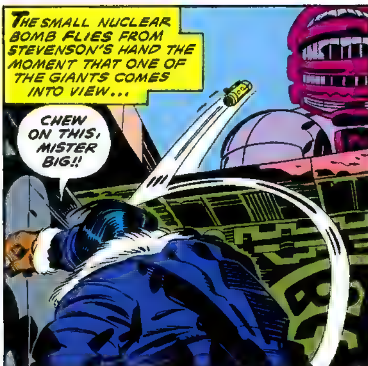

THEN STEVENSON MAKES HIS MOVE! HE STUNS AJAK WITH A POWERFUL BLOW TO HIS JAW...
UGH!
GOT HIM!
WAM!
GO, STEVENSON, GO!!

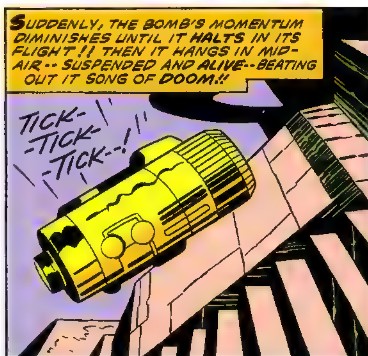
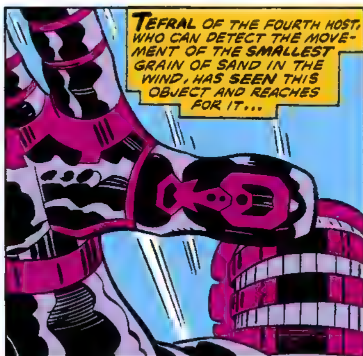
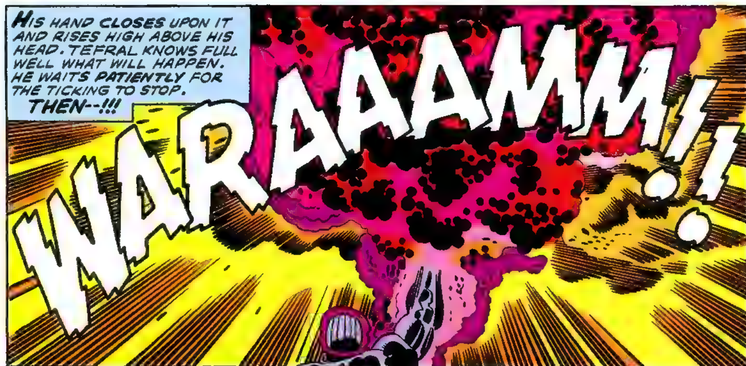

THIS HAYMAKER SHOULD PUT HIM DOWN!
KRAK!
STOP! THIS IS MADNESS!

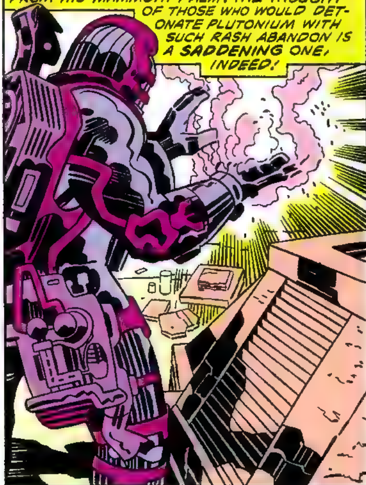

DOCTOR DAMIAN MAKES A FUTILE ATTEMPT TO INTER-VENE... BUT HE IS NO MATCH FOR EXPERIENCED SHIELD AGENTS!!
EASY, DAD!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEN ARE UP TO-- BUT I TELL YOU, IT'S USELESS!
WE'LL FIND THAT OUT SOON ENOUGH!! GOOD LUCK, STEVENSON!! REMEMBER TO TAKE COVER!
FOOLS!! FOOLS!!
WILL DO!

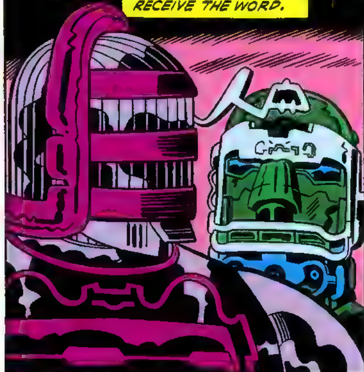

STEVENSON RACES UP THE STONE STEPS LEADING TO AN OPENING IN THE TEMPLE ROOF...
NOW WE'LL SEE WHAT THESE COCKAMAMIE LEGENDS ARE MADE OF!
SHIELD WANTS SOLID FACT, NOT OLD WIVES TALES!


GODS, DEVILS, OR SPACE GIANTS --THIS TACTICAL NUCLEAR DEVICE WILL DECIDE WHAT THEY ARE!
TICK-TICK-TICK-TICK--


THE SMALL NUCLEAR BOMB FLIES FROM STEVENSON'S HAND THE MOMENT THAT ONE OF THE GIANTS COMES INTO VIEW...
CHEW ON THIS, MISTER BIG!!

STEVENSON'S EAGERNESS TO WITNESS THE EFFECT IS SO STRONG THAT HE FOOLISHLY IGNORES THE URGE TO FIND COVER!! HE STARES IN WONDER AS THE BOMB COMPLETES ITS DEADLY ARC TOWARD THE ALIEN!!

SUDDENLY, THE BOMB'S MOMENTUM DIMINISHES UNTIL IT HALTS IN ITS FLIGHT!! THEN IT HANGS IN MID-AIR -- SUSPENDED AND ALIVE--BEATING OUT IT SONG OF DOOM!!
TICK- -TICK- -TICK--!

TEFRAL OF THE FOURTH HOST, WHO CAN DETECT THE MOVEMENT OF THE SMALLEST GRAIN OF SAND IN THE WIND, HAS SEEN THIS OBJECT AND REACHES FOR IT...

HIS HAND CLOSES UPON IT AND RISES HIGH ABOVE HIS HEAD. TEFRAL KNOWS FULL WELL WHAT WILL HAPPEN. HE WAITS PATIENTLY FOR THE TICKING TO STOP. THEN--!!!
WARAAAMM!!

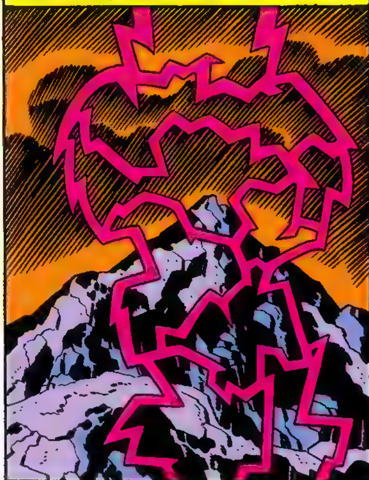




THE HOST ASSEMBLES AND STANDS OBEDIENTLY. THEIR BROTHERS ARE MANY AND STAND THUS ON A THOUSAND WORLDS WHERE THE SAME TASK MUST BE DONE. THE SEEDS OF AWARENESS ARE SOWN IN THE GALACTIC FIRMAMENT... THEY GROW WITH GREAT CLAMOR.

THEY REACH FOR THE STARS BUT THEY ARE FOREVER CUT DOWN BY THE FOURTH HOST!! THIS HAS PROCEEDED SINCE BEFORE GENESIS WAS WRITTEN... AND WILL CONTINUE UNTIL-- THE DAY OF ALPHA

ABOVE THE EARTH, IN FIXED ORBIT, THEIR CYCLOPEAN **SPACE HOME** HOVERS WITH SOMBER MAJESTY. INSIDE IT IS THE ONE ABOVE ALL. HIS WORD WILL SET THE TASK IN MOTION. IT WILL BE HIS WORD THAT WILL END IT...



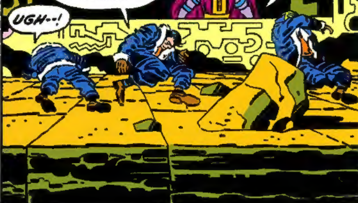



STEVENSON AND HIS MEN CLIMB OUT UPON THE PYRAMID'S LEDGE FOR A CLOSER LOOK AT THE CELESTIAL RITUAL...
I-IT'S JUST INCREDIBLE! THEY HANDLE A BOMBS LIKE ASPIRIN--! AND TALK IN WAYS THAT MAKE NASA LOOK LIKE A GRADE SCHOOL!!
YEAH... BUT THOSE ARE THE FRILLS! WHAT'S THE MEAT OF IT!!?
WHY ARE THEY HERE!?


THE "LADDER OF FIRE" HAS NOW BECOME A BLAZING COSMIC PILLAR WHICH DISSOLVES THE STANDING HOST IN WHITE ENERGY...
LOOK! THAT THING IS ENGULFING THE GIANTS!
T-THEY'RE FADING OUT!!

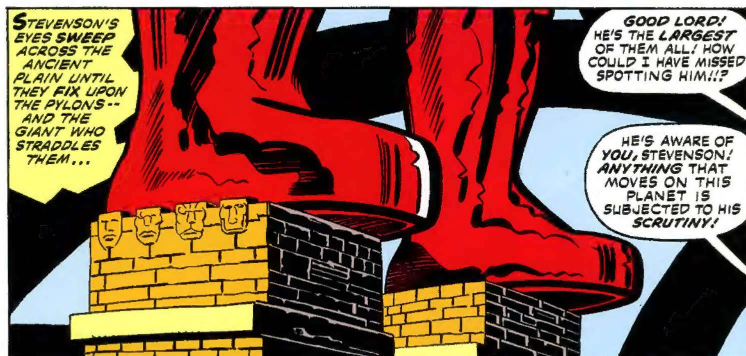

A MOMENT LATER, THE HOST HAS VANISHED! THEY HAVE ENTERED, AND ARE PART OF THE "WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL." THEY HAVE BEEN TRANSLATED INTO THE BASIC FORM OF ALL MATTER!!
QUICK!! COVER YOUR EYES! T-THIS IS LIKE WATCHING TEN HYDROGEN BOMBS GOING OFF AT ONCE!

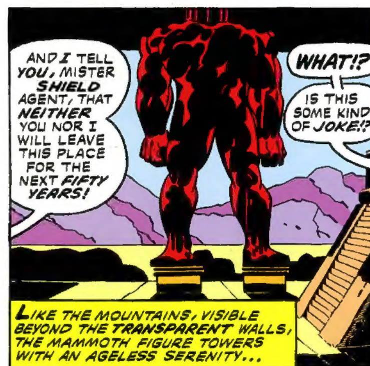

THEN, IT IS OVER! THERE IS AN ECHO TOO LOUD TO BE HEARD... A SUDDEN RUSH OF WIND WHICH PICKS UP THE ONLOOKERS AS IF THEY WERE STRAY LEAVES AND HURLS THEM AGAINST THE PYRAMID WALL...
LOOK OUT!! YAAAAA--!!

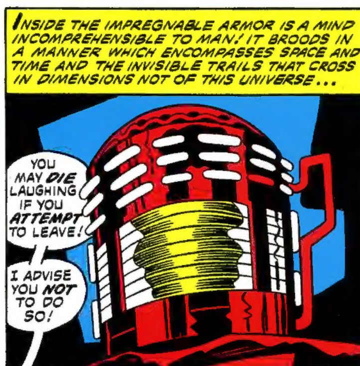

SILENCE... PAIN... AND SLOW RETURN TO A WORLD NOW FILLED WITH STRANGE PHENOMENA. STEVENSON IS FIRST TO GATHER HIS THOUGHTS...
UGH--!
W-WHAT WAS THAT THING? I-IT SWALLOWED THE GIANTS... AND NOW THEY'RE... GONE!!!
THEY HAVEN'T GONE! THEY'RE MERELY EVERYWHERE--! IN EVERY CORNER OF THE EARTH!


A-AFTER WHAT WE'VE SEEN HERE, MY MEN AND I MUST GET BACK TO SHIELD STARTING NOW!
IMPOSSIBLE, STEVENSON.


NOTHING'S GOING TO STOP US! NOTHING!!!
HE WILL !!! IT SEEMS YOU OVERLOOKED HIS PRESENCE DURING THESE PROCEEDINGS!


STEVENSON'S EYES SWEEP ACROSS THE ANCIENT PLAIN UNTIL THEY FIX UPON THE PYLONS -- AND THE GIANT WHO STRADDLES THEM...
GOOD LORD! HE'S THE LARGEST OF THEM ALL! HOW COULD I HAVE MISSED SPOTTING HIM!!?
HE'S AWARE OF YOU, STEVENSON! ANYTHING THAT MOVES ON THIS PLANET IS SUBJECTED TO HIS SCRUTINY!


AND I TELL YOU, MISTER SHIELD AGENT, THAT NEITHER YOU NOR I WILL LEAVE THIS PLACE FOR THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS!
WHAT!?
IS THIS SOME KIND OF JOKE!?
LIKE THE MOUNTAINS, VISIBLE BEYOND THE TRANSPARENT WALLS, THE MAMMOTH FIGURE TOWERS WITH AN AGELESS SERENITY...


INSIDE THE IMPREGNABLE ARMOR IS A MIND INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO MAN! IT BROODS IN A MANNER WHICH ENCOMPASSES SPACE AND TIME AND THE INVISIBLE TRAILS THAT CROSS IN DIMENSIONS NOT OF THIS UNIVERSE...
YOU MAY DIE LAUGHING IF YOU ATTEMPT TO LEAVE!
I ADVISE YOU NOT TO DO SO!


BUT, YOU'RE GOING TO TRY IT ANYHOW, AREN'T YOU!
GOT TO, AJAK... RISK IS A PART OF THE JOB... I'M SORRY I BELTED YOU... YOU'RE OKAY...
SO LONG, DOC...
GOOD LUCK, STEVENSON...


WARY OF THE IMMOBILE GIANT, THE SHIELD AGENTS RACE DOWN THE PYRAMID STEPS IN A BID FOR FREEDOM...
THIS IS IT, FELLAS! KEEP GOING! DON'T STOP UNTIL WE'RE IN THE CLEAR!
I'M HIP!


DOCTOR DAMIAN AND AJAK WATCH WITH SILENT ADMIRATION AND LEADEN HEARTS AT MAN'S CONTINUAL WILLINGNESS TO GAMBLE AGAINST MOUNTAINOUS ODDS!!
IT'S WRITTEN IN MYTHOLOGY THAT THE GODS ARE UNPREDICTABLE!! DO YOU THINK THOSE COURAGEOUS FOOLS MIGHT POSSIBLY--MAKE IT?
I AM AN ETERNAL, NOT A CELESTIAL! IT IS NOT MY WILL THEY DEFY!


THE ANSWER COMES SWIFTLY... IN A BLINDING, SEARING FLASH, FROM WHICH THE TWO RECOIL WITH INSTINCTIVE ACTION!
TTZZZSSHH!


AJAK!! W-WHAT WAS THAT!? Y-YOU DON'T THINK--
NO, I DON'T THINK THOSE MEN ARE DEAD! BUT I'M QUITE CERTAIN THAT THEY DIDN'T ESCAPE...


W-WHAT HAPPENED? W-WHAT WAS DONE TO THEM?
NOTHING THAT WASN'T DONE BEFORE... BE ASSURED, DOCTOR, OUR VISITORS WILL SPEND THEIR NEXT FIFTY YEARS IN RELATIVE CALM!


AJAK KNOWS WHAT LIES AT THE FOOT OF THE PYRAMID STEPS. HE ALSO KNOWS THAT STORED ATOMS EXPERIENCE NO DISCONTENT...

ARISHEM, THE MIGHTIEST OF THE FOURTH HOST, HAVING ENFORCED HIS WILL, RAISES HIS MAMMOTH ARM TOWARD THE SKY. IT SIGNALS THE BEGINNING OF THE **FIFTY YEAR JUDGMENT**-- THE FINAL STAGE OF AN EXPERIMENT CARRIED OUT BY THE CELESTIALS, AMONG THE COUNTLESS STARS, ON COUNTLESS WORLDS LIKE EARTH, IN THE FOND HOPE OF GENERATING WHAT THE CELESTIALS TERM AS **ALPHA DAY!**

BUT ENDLESS TIME HAS PRODUCED ENDLESS **FAILURE!** THUS, ARISHEM STANDS READY TO DO WHAT HE HAS ALWAYS DONE.

HE IS A PLANET-KILLER!!

ENGRAVED ON HIS THUMB IS THE FORMULA FOR **WORLD DESTRUCTION!!**

IF EARTH FAILS--

EARTH DIES!!

NEXT!

DON'T MISS IT!!!

MYSTERIES AND MONSTERS IN THE

CITY OF THE TOADS